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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 1 June 1993, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. HADID (Algeria)

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(a) Annual report of the Executive Director for 1992 and programme-level activities (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (continued)

(a) ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR 1992 AND PROGRAMME-LEVEL ACTIVITIES (continued) (DP/1993/29 (Parts I, II and III), DP/1993/30, DP/1993/31, DP/1993/32 and Corr.1, DP/1993/33, DP/1993/34 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. ZIMMERMANN (United States of America) said that his country recognized the critical role of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in addressing urgent needs for population assistance and had worked closely with UNFPA over the years to help meet those needs. The preparations for the forthcoming International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo had reminded all those participating of the demographic diversity between and among regions of the world and had helped focus attention on the complex interrelationships between population, economic growth and sustainable development. Great challenges lay ahead and Governments, in partnership with international and non-governmental organizations and the private sector, must work together towards solutions. The United States was determined to help lead and be a part of the global effort to address population problems. President Clinton understood the negative impact of rapid population growth on women's health and empowerment, the environment, and prospects for sustainable economic development, and was committed to moving population to the forefront of his country's international priorities. Since assuming office, he had taken a number of important steps to revitalize United States population assistance efforts, including lifting restrictions that had prohibited some family planning organizations from receiving United States funding because of abortion-related activities, ordering a reorganization of the State Department to give greater visibility to the population issue and calling for a restructuring of United States foreign aid programmes to promote development more effectively. He had also requested a $100 million increase in United States population assistance for fiscal year 1994.

2. The United States had already announced its desire to contribute to UNFPA. It understood the importance of forging a strong partnership with international population agencies. Like other Member States, it based its family planning efforts on voluntarism. When a nation's programme consistently ignored the right of couples and individuals to determine freely the size of their families, the international community must condemn such abuses of basic human rights and do everything in its power to stop them.

3. UNFPA had been supporting activities in China for 13 years and must now decide whether its efforts had significantly improved voluntarism in China and, indeed, whether it was possible for UNFPA to have such an impact on the China programme. The questions of whether UNFPA had been an agent of progress and whether, if it had not, it could be, must be addressed.

4. Recent reports showed a dramatic drop in China's fertility rate, suggesting that coercion might have been used to achieve those extraordinary declines. Those reports had heightened the concern and frustration throughout the United States Government that China might still be employing coercion in its programme.

(Mr. Zimmermann, United States)

His delegation called on all members and international organizations to condemn such abuses wherever they might occur.

5. The challenges for the future were formidable, but the international community knew what needed to be done and how to do it. What was required at present was unanimity of purpose and the political will to do what was needed to ensure a bright future for coming generations.

6. Ms. AL AWADHI (Kuwait) expressed appreciation to UNFPA for its support of the role of women in development and family planning, and for its financing of projects involving women and population. With regard to UNFPA activities deriving from the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, and in particular, studies on the impact of environmental degradation on the work and health of women, her delegation hoped that UNFPA would be able to assist Kuwait in following up studies by the Environmental Protection Council of Kuwait on the current and future impact on health of the environmental pollution arising from the burning by the Iraqi aggressors of over 700 oil wells.

7. Mr. POPESCU (Romania) said that his delegation had been pleased to see that the Fund had continued to make notable progress in 1992, had vigorously promoted the concept of family planning as a basic human right and had supported activities strengthening its capacity to deal with issues concerning women, population and development. The Fund had also continued to strengthen its programme implementation, focusing on strategic programming and improving its effectiveness in delivering high quality technical assistance. His delegation had also been pleased to note the increase in pledges as compared with 1991 as well as the increase in the percentage of women in UNFPA's professional staff. At the same time, it regretted the decline in the project expenditure rate.

8. His delegation fully supported the recommendation of the Executive Director concerning the approval of the 1994-1995 budget and her four recommendations on the Work Plan for 1994-1997, and was glad to see that a high proportion of regular resources would continue to be allocated to country activities. His delegation also supported all of the 15 country programmes submitted for approval to the Council.

9. Noting that data for Europe and the Arab countries were still combined, he suggested that the Secretariat should circulate information on Europe separately so that the Council could have a clearer picture of UNFPA's presence in Europe, where participation in the Fund's programmes and activities was increasing following the structural changes in Eastern Europe. His delegation reiterated its proposal that country activities should be broken down by geographic region rather than by UNFPA divisions at headquarters; it would welcome the establishment in the near future of a Division for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States in the UNFPA secretariat.

10. His Government attached great importance to its cooperation with UNFPA in the current period of transition to a market economy. Its reconsideration of the former regime's national planning strategy had opened the way to fruitful cooperation between Romania and the Fund. The UNFPA project for assistance on

(Mr. Popescu, Romania)

family planning signed in 1990 had been successfully completed in 1992, and more assistance in family planning was expected from the Fund in various sectors.

11. In January 1992, Romania had, with the help of UNFPA, undertaken its first full population and housing census in 15 years, the preliminary results of which had already been published. The Government was seriously concerned at the decline in the total fertility rate and wished to prepare a survey on family planning and fertility as soon as possible; it hoped to receive UNFPA assistance in that connection.

12. His country appreciated the assistance given by UNFPA to the research projects of the Economic Commission for Europe, which had been helpful to it, and would like the Fund's support to be continued.

13. Despite the difficulties it was facing in the current period of transition, his Government had steadily increased its voluntary contribution to UNFPA beginning with 1991 and that contribution was now seven times greater than in 1991.

14. Mr. CHEN Jian (China) said that his delegation agreed with the analysis made by the Executive Director of the world population situation and wished to express its satisfaction with UNFPA's activities and achievements during 1992.

15. The world was at present witnessing an annual net increase of 93 million in world population, which was worrisome for all. It was clear from the Executive Director's report that it was mostly in developing countries that economic development was adversely affected by population issues; that situation deserved close attention from the international community. His delegation hoped that the International Conference on Population and Development would enable the international community to reach consensus on the relationship between population and development and to map out a feasible and practical international strategy. It was its hope that all countries, especially the developed ones, would do their best to increase the resources made available for population activities.

16. His Government attached great importance to the issues of population, environment and development and had designated family planning and environmental protection as fundamental state policies. Although China had made notable progress in family planning and population control, the situation there remained challenging due inter alia to the country's huge population, lack of arable land and poor economic foundation. Since China had to feed 22 per cent of the world's population with only 7 per cent of the world's arable land, it had no choice but to practice family planning and population control. That required great sacrifice by the Chinese people, both for its own sake and for that of mankind as a whole, and its efforts deserved the understanding and support of the international community.

17. It was the Chinese Government's policy to integrate governmental guidance with the wishes of the people in implementing family planning programmes. Accordingly, its family planning programme had been made case-specific and its national goals in that area had been formulated through legislative processes

(Mr. Chen Jian, China)

and were then explained through extensive publicity so as to ensure that adequate information was available to people to make their own decisions. That it encouraged one child per couple did not mean that a couple could have only one child. Rural families who had real difficulties could have a second child and in ethnic rural areas farmers could have up to three or four children per family.

18. China's family planning programme had been implemented mainly through publicity and education, the distribution of contraceptives and the provision of family planning services. It had also adopted measures to enhance women's social status, to protect women's and children's rights, to improve education and health services, maternal and child health care and the social welfare and security system and to assist the development of poverty areas. After more than 20 years of ceaseless efforts, the excessive population growth in China had been brought under control, alleviating the pressure on socio-economic development. The birth rate of China's population in 1992 had fallen to 18.24 per thousand, although those figures by no means reflected a stable trend. The infant and maternal mortality rates had also been brought down substantially and average life expectancy had increased.

19. Although the Government had consistently opposed the use of coercion for implementing its family planning policy, given the huge size of the country, it was almost inevitable that some unpleasant things would occur. The Government had been making great efforts to educate the staff of the programmes in order to eliminate such practices. It would be happy to discuss its policies and programmes with those who wished to learn more about them and would welcome visits to China for the same purpose. It firmly rejected the irresponsible and unfounded allegations that had been made by the United States representative.

20. Over the past decade, China had effectively cooperated with UNFPA and part of the credit for its achievements in family planning and population control must go to the Fund. His delegation appreciated UNFPA's technical assistance to China and hoped that such cooperation would be further strengthened and developed in the future.

21. Mr. MORALES CARBALLO (Cuba) said that while the importance of UNFPA's work was universally recognized, its funds were clearly inadequate. As a result measures which could otherwise have been carried out immediately were having to be postponed. His delegation looked forward to the International Conference on Population and Development and hoped that by the time it was held the Fund's current financial difficulties would have been overcome.

22. Mr. MOYE (United Kingdom) endorsed the statement made that morning by Denmark on behalf of the European Community, and supported the views expressed by the Canadian representative. Its approach to population questions was based on the desire to extend peoples's choices concerning their own fertility and it joined with the United States in condemning coercion in any population programme anywhere in the world. It believed that once population services were available and people could choose when and how many children they wished to have, population increase would begin to slow dramatically. It had increased its bilateral aid for population activities by 60 per cent over the past three years

(Mr. Moye, United Kingdom)

and had doubled the number of countries in which it had major population programmes. Its assistance was delivered through a variety of channels and it believed that in order to ensure that those investments achieved maximum impact it might be necessary to alter the emphasis placed on each channel after assessing the value-for-money obtained through each of them.

23. UNFPA had a leading role to play in helping countries establish good quality reproductive health services and formulate their own population policies. Aid resources were, however, limited, and UNFPA, like all other multilateral aid agencies, must demonstrate that it was making good use of those resources. UNFPA must therefore continually examine the quality and effectiveness of its activities and the value-for-money obtained by its donors. In determining their future assistance to UNFPA, his delegation believed that donors would wish to examine the Fund's objectives, whether those objectives reflected changing needs, opportunities and constraints, how effectively those objectives were being met and whether the resources made available were being used efficiently.

24. The major focus of UNFPA activities must be at the country level, but, given the variable quality of country programmes, overall standards needed to be improved. Good country programmes must be based on sound analysis of the population problems in close consultation with other donors, the development of appropriate strategies to deal with those problems, with due attention to institutional resources and related constraints, well-designed population programmes and effective implementation. The successor support cost arrangements should help improve implementation, but more should be done to diversify the Fund's sources of expertise, through greater involvement of non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Field offices had an important role to play in promoting in-country coordination of population assistance, although all parties concerned must be willing to cooperate.

25. The immediate priority should be to respond to unmet demand for family planning. Country programmes must give top priority to the development of family planning services and access to contraceptives. He welcomed the increased resources allocated to family planning in 1992 which now represented almost 50 per cent of total allocations, and hoped that the trend would continue.

26. In 1992 his country had engaged consultants to carry out a cost-efficiency study of UNFPA activities in two countries. Some of the concerns expressed in that study were also raised in the recent multi-donor evaluation report, particularly the lack of strategic focus and the fact that activities were spread too thinly over too many countries in too many programme sectors. The report recommended fewer, larger and higher quality projects with potentially greater impact and advocated greater rigour in examining funding requests. The Council should examine the report's findings carefully and consider how its recommendations could be implemented.

27. He noted the Executive Director's call for increased donor support and expressed the hope that, despite competing pressures for scarce resources, donors would follow his country's example in giving priority to population

(Mr. Moye, United Kingdom)

assistance. However, UNFPA must realize that it was not the only channel for providing population assistance and that, ultimately, its ability to attract increased resources would be determined by the quality of its own performance. For its part, his delegation was fully committed to working closely with UNFPA to help increase the effectiveness and efficiency of its assistance.

28. Mr. CART (Switzerland) said that while his country intended to increase its contribution to the Fund, even though it was having to reduce its contributions to other activities, it believed that UNFPA should be more selective in its priorities. It should recognize that the population question needed to be seen as part of a global development policy; it should emphasize the role of local non-governmental organizations in the field of information, education and communication activities; and, it should restrict the funding of concrete activities, particularly the provision of equipment, to least developed countries and pilot projects, since other agencies were better placed to provide funding of that kind.

29. In order to respond more effectively to local conditions and requirements, it was vital to decentralize UNFPA activities. With that in view, field offices should be given greater responsibilities and their staff expanded while the staff at Headquarters should be reduced. With that in view, better training was required in order to promote a culture of enterprise and innovation and overcome bureaucratic inertia. In that connection, he endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Canada concerning accountability.

30. The recent UNFPA evaluation had been highly critical of the role of United Nations specialized agencies in project implementation and he hoped that the frank remarks made on that subject would result in appropriate measures being taken to remedy the matter. The evaluation had also stressed the need for greater reliance on the activities of local non-governmental organizations, which had a crucial role to play in helping to promote democratic participation and in providing access to grass-roots communities. It was true that not all such organizations were properly representative, but field offices were in a position to provide relevant information on that question.

31. His delegation had taken an active part in the preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development and he hoped that the spirit of cooperation which had prevailed would continue and that a new and innovative programme of action could be developed.

32. Mr. BROUWERS (Netherlands), after endorsing the statement made by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that his delegation welcomed the way in which UNFPA was addressing the complex population problem at all the various levels. He appreciated the focus on choice in reproductive matters as a basic human right, which had also been central to the discussions held during the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population and Development and should serve as the starting-point for any action in that field.

33. It was clear that UNFPA intended to focus its family planning activities on adolescents and he fully agreed that information, education and communication in

(Mr. Brouwers, Netherlands)

that field was vital. In his own country, that approach had been successful in achieving a very low rate of adolescent pregnancies and abortions and, while appreciating that circumstances were very different in developing countries, particularly with regard to the availability of contraceptives, he was eager to know what measures UNFPA intended to take to make family planning methods available to adolescents and how the focus on unmarried youngsters would fit in with the Fund's stated intention of concentrating on the integration of family planning in traditional maternal and child health care.

34. Turning to regional and country-level activities, he felt that, while the specific strategy for sub-Saharan Africa was still valid, special attention should be given to the region, with particular reference to gender issues. There was a growing commitment on the part of African Governments to address the position and status of women and, despite some positive developments, much remained to be done, particularly in the field of recruiting women to positions of responsibility in the field of family planning and population policy formulation. Capacity-building in the area of policy formulation was also a priority and he would welcome information on the planned transfer to Africa of a training course under the Global Programme of Training in Population and Development, which his Government co-financed. With regard to the republics of central Asia, his Government was currently considering the possibility of providing financial support for the projects drawn up on the basis of the UNFPA needs assessment mission. With regard to the role of UNFPA in China, his Government strongly condemned coercion in family-planning practices and considered it vital that UNFPA should remain active in the country, both as an advocate of free and informed choice and responsible parenthood and as an opponent of any kind of coercion. The Governing Council should continue to monitor UNFPA activities in China very closely.

35. His delegation welcomed the efforts made by UNFPA to streamline its activities in the context of the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 47/199 and stressed the value of the recent multi-donor evaluation, which contained a number of highly relevant observations and recommendations.

36. One area in which improved United Nations coordination was of vital importance was HIV/AIDS activities. His delegation had co-sponsored the resolution adopted by the World Health Assembly requesting the Director-General of the World Health Organization to undertake a study on a joint and co-sponsored United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS, which would be a vital step in the process of coordinating United Nations activities in that area. The AIDS pandemic required a multisectoral approach in which every United Nations organization had a role to play and he urged UNFPA to contribute to the study.

37. Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia) welcomed the innovative and far-reaching ideas put forward by the Executive Director, including the expansion of family planning services and the availability of contraceptives, as well as the emphasis on requirements such as data collection and analysis, policy formulation and advocacy in support of women. The proposals for improving field capacity and financing were indicative of the commitment of UNFPA to maintaining the organization's delivery capability and improving its efficiency. His delegation supported efforts to strengthen the resident coordinator system as a way of

(Mr. Wibisono, Indonesia)

improving delivery and simplifying procedure, while helping host Governments to coordinate their activities with United Nations efforts, in line with General Assembly resolution 47/199.

38. On the question of resources, his delegation supported the appeal made by the Executive Director to developing and developed countries to strive to mobilize their peace dividend in order to help achieve sustainable development, a goal that could not be achieved while rapid population growth and extreme poverty persisted.

39. In his country, development was generally understood as meaning the development of the full human being, as a member of the family and of society, and as a citizen. All citizens therefore had certain rights and responsibilities under the laws governing population. Legislation on population growth and the creation of a prosperous family had been enacted in 1992 in preparation for the implementation of a second long-term development programme due to begin in 1994.

40. With regard to the International Conference on Population and Development, he stressed the importance attached to the Conference by the Non-Aligned Movement, which had reaffirmed the value of exchanging information and experience on the implementation of population policies and programmes in their respective countries. A ministerial meeting was due to be held in his country before the end of the year, with a view to strengthening cooperation in the field and formulating guidelines for the preparation of the Conference by the non-aligned countries.

41. Mr. Rysinski (Poland) took the Chair.

42. Mr. BLANK (Germany) said that awareness of resource constraints had grown over the past years, as had the belief that available resources should be used as effectively as possible not only in order to best serve the recipients of the assistance, but also to enable UNFPA to attract more contributions. His Government had increased its 1993 contribution by 4.6 per cent to 43.2 million marks. The evaluation prepared by his Government and the Governments of Finland and Canada, had recommended that UNFPA and the Governing Council should review the Fund's overall strategy regarding resource allocation. The Governing Council should spell out its expectations and priorities, specifically for technical support and advice versus funding. Allocations should be governed by the expected return on the investment, so that more resources flowed to countries in which investments were likely to yield the greatest benefits. Factors such as readiness for greater population programming efforts and government attitudes and practices towards such programming should be taken into consideration.

43. Some countries lacked strategic focus and had too many projects which had marginal impact on long-term population goals. Although the Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) process had improved the planning of country programmes, it had not provided specific strategic directions. UNFPA should develop its own internal country strategy to achieve better focused country level programming and fewer but larger projects.

(Mr. Blank, Germany)

44. The Fund and the Governing Council should review their relationship since the evaluation had shown that the Governing Council acted sometimes as a constraint on UNFPA by demanding extensive reporting and being involved in detailed decision-making at the country programme level. Trends to concentrate inter-country activities, increase Government execution, decrease execution through specialized agencies and increase the number of women professionals should receive the continuing support of the Governing Council.

45. His Government would continue to support the preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development, and it planned to sponsor a seminar on population policy and AIDS and its effects on women and family planning.

46. Mr. HUSAIN (Observer for Bangladesh) said that as his country ranked ninth in terms of population and had the highest population density in the world, it had a special interest in population issues. As the current Chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Bangladesh was committed to promoting population programmes in the region, including a multisectoral programme representing a total outlay of over $600 million. Population programmes in his country had greatly benefited from the participation of UNFPA and other multilateral and bilateral donor partners.

47. An integrated approach was needed to effectively tackle population, environmental and women's issues and poverty alleviation. Resources needed to keep pace with increasing demands. His country was concerned that 1993 contributions to UNFPA had stagnated at the 1992 level of $238 million, and hoped that donor countries would contribute generously to UNFPA, so that it could continue its current programme level and increase it in the future. While allocations to priority countries had increased to 74.2 per cent in 1992, UNFPA should address the fact that project allocations had decreased from $212 million in 1991 to $163.6 million in 1992. While his country fully supported the restructuring process at the United Nations, that process should not be undertaken at the expense of UNFPA's capacity to respond to the critical needs of the developing countries.

48. It was hoped that the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 would gain further momentum in the future. UNFPA's field office capacity should be increased and further decentralization, including programme support and delegation of authority to the field offices, would be highly appropriate. Information, education and communication needed to be strengthened so as to have greater impact.

49. Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) said that because of its unique non-political nature, only UNFPA could assist developing countries in strategy development. UNFPA had a fundamental role to play in the promotion of technology, technical expertise and advice. Her country was committed to population issues and had incorporated the outlines of a population strategy in its eighth five-year plan.

50. While her delegation strongly supported the principle of non-coercion in population matters, it agreed with the Chinese delegation that given the vast size of that country, incidents might occur that were not condoned by the

(Ms. Janjua, Pakistan)

Government. UNFPA could supplement the efforts of the Chinese Government by providing technical expertise and advice.

51. The multi-donor evaluation was commendable but should be examined in detail by the capitals with the full participation of recipient countries. In addition, it should be reviewed once the Cairo Conference had taken place.

52. Mr. SOH (Republic of Korea) said that his country had continued to work on world population issues and would continue to support UNFPA efforts in the future.

53. Mr. JANHA (Gambia) said that countries in Africa were committed to addressing population issues, as demonstrated by the Third African Population Conference on "Population, Family and Sustainable Development", held in Dakar, Senegal, in December 1992. Country programmes, including those of his country, stressed the importance of integrating family planning services into general health services. Those country programmes also emphasized information, education and communication which were needed to change attitudes in order for people to see the linkages between population growth, natural resource management and poverty. Donor intervention should be directed towards supporting existing programmes, which had been established through extensive consultations at all levels, especially the grass-roots level. While developed countries emphasized the need to strengthen NGOs, in fact, capacity at the grass-roots level needed to be expanded so that people would learn to manage their own lives.

54. Mr. VAN ARENDONK (Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNFPA), introducing the progress report on UNFPA successor support cost arrangements (DP/1993/32), said that following the Governing Council's meeting in May 1992, UNFPA had convened two meetings of the Inter-Agency Task Force to discuss issues relating to the new technical support services (TSS) system.

55. As of May 1993, 109 out of 136 posts due to be filled in 1992 had been encumbered, 80 at Country Support Team (CST) offices and 29 at headquarters. All the CSTs had become operational and host country agreements had been signed, or were under negotiation. Orientation workshops had been completed for seven of the eight CSTs, for a total of 73 advisers. A similar workshop for the CST for the Arab States would be held in the third quarter of 1993. It was clear that the CSTs were ready and willing to develop innovative strategies to respond to changing needs in the population field.

56. The TSS system had already made considerable achievements. A systematic, integrated, inter-disciplinary way of responding to requests for technical assistance was gradually evolving as Governments, through the UNFPA country field offices, identified technical backstopping needs on the basis of comprehensive population programmes; a key element in the success of those arrangements was comprehensive planning by all concerned. Team building was proceeding rapidly, focusing on national population programmes as the basis for coordinating assistance, and reinforced by advisers at all stages of work. Improved mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating population programmes were being established through greater involvement of CSTs in the whole programming

(Mr. Van Arendonk)

process, under the Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) process. The accountability of the Executive Director was being enhanced by transparency in how advisers were recruited and utilized; UNFPA was ensuring that only the most competent professionals were appointed. Steps continued to be taken to help increase each country's self-reliance in population matters, through the use of national expertise, organized training activities and the maintenance of updated rosters of national consultants.

57. UNFPA had been able to surmount the initial obstacles in implementing the new arrangements, thanks to the collaboration of partner agencies. The major constraints had been the initial uncertainty as to exactly how the new system would function, which had resulted in inadequate technical backstopping and incomplete CST work plans; administrative and bureaucratic problems, which had delayed the transfer of incumbents and equipment to CST sites as well as the appointment of new advisers; and the reduction of the TSS budget from $20.1 million to $15.7 million because of UNFPA's financial situation, resulting in delays in the establishment of some CST offices and difficulties in estimating expenditures for the period 1993 to 1995.

58. Steps were being taken to improve implementation of the TSS arrangements. In 1993, UNFPA proposed to start an annual evaluation of the performance of all CST advisers and agency specialists and coordinators; that evaluation would also make it possible to determine whether the distribution of fields of competence and of specialists responded to country needs.

59. The TSS arrangements placed UNFPA at the forefront in implementing General Assembly resolution 47/199. The team approach enabled the Fund to coordinate assistance on the basis of comprehensive national population programmes. Since the CSTs were located at eight different sites providing coverage of regions and subregions, the TSS system supported the decentralization process and brought technical assistance and backstopping much closer to countries. It responded to the urgent need to build the necessary capacity to undertake national execution by providing support services at the field level.

60. Mr. SINGH (Director, Technical and Evaluation Division, UNFPA), introducing the report reviewing the Fund's experience in implementing the priority country system (DP/1993/33) said that the system had been operational since 1977 and had proved its value to the Fund in targeting resources to countries that had the most serious population problems and the greatest need for external assistance. UNFPA had concluded that the process, criteria and thresholds established in 1988, in Governing Council decision 88/34 A, paragraph 4, continued to be the most viable method to identify priority countries for UNFPA assistance. Although developing countries as a group had made considerable progress in the areas measured by the indicators used, UNFPA did not believe it advisable to modify the threshold levels as that would jeopardize priority assistance to a large number of countries which had made some progress but continued to need international assistance.

61. UNFPA had continued to concentrate its country programming funds in the priority countries as called for by the Governing Council in decision 88/34 A. In relative terms, the Fund had allocated approximately 75 per cent of country

(Mr. Singh)

programme resources to priority countries in 1992 and it hoped to reach the target of 80 per cent by 1994. In each priority country, the strategic policies and approaches were developed through the PRSD exercise and formed the basis for the formulation and implementation of UNFPA country programmes.

62. The TSS arrangement would benefit priority countries greatly as it provided for a flexible and differentiated response to the unique needs of individual countries. The eight regionally based CSTs would be able to provide multidisciplinary technical advice within the framework of a comprehensive programme approach.

63. The report proposed the introduction of a more dynamic system of priority countries, with revisions every two years; the Fund would then be able to adjust its programmes accordingly. Application of the latest economic, demographic and literacy data to the current criteria and thresholds had resulted in 58 countries qualifying for priority assistance; eight countries had been added to the previous list, and five countries no longer qualified as priority countries.

64. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that the independent evaluation that had been undertaken in the early stages of TSS had given a mixed review to execution and technical backstopping by United Nations agencies and had cited United Nations agency execution as a constraint on the success of UNFPA's programmes. Her delegation was pleased to note that an evaluation of TSS was planned for late 1993; looking ahead to the 1995 TSS progress report, it underscored its concerns regarding the cost of the system and the need to demonstrate value for money.

65. Her delegation had serious concerns regarding the priority country system. It recognized the need for such a system and for the use of a mixture of criteria, but felt that the current system was unsatisfactory; there was little variation in the profile of assistance across work plan categories between priority and non-priority countries, and no clearly discernible link between priority designation and size of country programme.

66. She asked whether the current criteria were being properly applied to allocation and programming decisions, or whether other factors external to the stated criteria were coming into play; if so, they should be brought into the open. Secondly, she felt that there were other critical factors that should be taken into account when priority country status was conferred, including the size and scope of national and other donor activity in a country, the state and stage of population programming, and the Government's preparedness to take on population issues from a policy point of view.

67. Given those concerns, Canada was reluctant to accept the priority country system as it stood and requested that the findings of the independent evaluation and related recommendations should form the basis of a study by an informal group of UNFPA staff and selected Council members in 1994, which would prepare a report with recommendations on an updated allocations system for UNFPA.

68. Mr. GUO Xianzhi (China) said that it was too early to review the role and benefits of the new TSS system. However, attempts must be made to further rationalize the relationship between CSTs, the specialized agency acting as

(Mr. Guo Xianzhi, China)

executing agency and the UNFPA field office; in particular, there must be a clear division of labour and responsibility between CSTs and the specialized agencies in the execution of individual projects.

69. One of the central goals of the TSS system was to strengthen national self-reliance in recipient countries; UNFPA should therefore make priority use of national expertise and national institutions, in accordance with the relevant resolutions.

70. The priority country system was a fairly good solution to the problem of resource allocation and had helped UNFPA achieve the goal of providing assistance to countries which had the most urgent population problems. The current criteria were reasonable and should be maintained; in addition, his delegation hoped that UNFPA would endeavour to implement the programme strategies highlighted in document DP/1993/33, and would increase the quality of technical assistance and achieve the goal of using 80 per cent of funds for priority countries.

71. Mr. MOYE (United Kingdom) said that his delegation was pleased that the TSS system was being established. It shared UNFPA's concerns about the delays in recruitment and its belief that insufficient emphasis had been given to MCH/FP posts.

72. He requested UNFPA to comment on the performance of the Inter-Agency Task Force; indicate what countries could do to help implement the TSS system; and explain how the CSTs' performance with respect to the development of national expertise would be assessed.

73. His delegation endorsed the comments made by the representative of Canada regarding the priority country system. It was somewhat disappointed that the system had not changed significantly, since it seemed to restrict UNFPA in its mode of operation by requiring that 80 per cent of resources be allocated to priority countries, even though some priority countries had a limited absorptive capacity.

74. He asked whether UNFPA felt that the current system helped or hindered its efforts to improve the quality of assistance; whether the priority criteria should be adjusted to incorporate those non-priority countries which, for specifiable reasons, appeared to warrant assistance; and whether, recognizing current differentials between regions, it would be more realistic to abandon the global target for priority countries and instead establish separate regional targets.

75. Mrs. TROOSTER (Netherlands) said that the Netherlands considered the new TSS system to be an important development in UNFPA's efforts to improve technical assistance at the country level. It regretted the obstacles which had resulted in a delay in forming the CSTs. Moreover, her delegation would appreciate clarification on the slow recruitment of experts on women and population, and the low percentage of female team members.

(Mrs. Trooster, Netherlands)

76. Her delegation supported the recommendation that country directors and UNFPA representatives should more actively inform Governments about the new technical assistance system, but did not feel that that should lead to forcing TSS services upon Governments. UNFPA must realize that CSTs had their limitations with regard to their operational capacity; its focus should lie in exploiting existing national capacity. In that connection, she noted the recommendation made in the evaluation carried out on behalf of Canada, Finland and Germany that UNFPA's strategic position should vary according to the specific country situation and that inter-country activities should be adequately linked to the practical needs of country programmes.

77. The priority country system was a valuable way of concentrating the Fund's limited resources in the developing countries that had the most serious population problems. However, the criteria used seemed to focus primarily on the need to lower growth and fertility rates, ignoring one of the most important aspects of the population question, namely, the need to promote and safeguard reproductive health through the provision of high quality family planning services. Her delegation therefore requested UNFPA to study the possibility of integrating the maternal mortality rate as an additional criterion for determining priority status.

78. Her delegation believed that UNFPA's global mandate should not be altered, but agreed that the Fund should try to achieve greater strategic focus in its country programming and should bear in mind its own comparative advantage as a multilateral organization, taking into account the activities of other donors and the growing input of non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

79. She requested clarification of the indication in paragraph 3 of document DP/1993/33 that UNFPA would consider providing assistance to the countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States for which UNDP had allocated indicative planning figures. She also asked whether the countries concerned had been screened for priority status.

80. Mr. MORALES CARBALLO (Cuba) said that the TSS system should improve the technical level of consultancy and reduce the costs borne by Governments in the payment of fees to consultants.

81. His delegation understood the need for the priority country system but felt that the Fund should remain accessible to all countries because population problems affected all countries in varying degrees.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.